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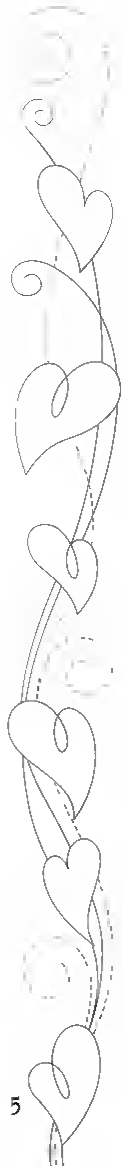
第29話



Howwww
SMILE

WELCOME BACK!
YOU'RE HOME EARLY~
THE GIRL YOU BROUGHT HOME LAST NIGHT
WAS CUTER
EH~? NO WAY, SHINO-CHAN IS MUCH CUTER!
...HEY..
WHO IS THAT ..?
HUH?
Cousin?
Aunt?
Mother?
HARUMI.
MY GIRL-FRIEND.

EHHH--?
GET OUT.
WE'RE BREAKING UP TODAY THOUGH
SIX YEARS OR SO SINCE WE STARTED DATING?
IT'S BEEN ABOUT...
WE'RE CHILD-HOOD FRIENDS.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH.
HUHH HH??
HOW COME--?
WHAT'S WRONG?
OH, AND THAT GIRL OVER THERE
SHE DOESN'T HAVE A PLACE TO LIVE ANY MORE, 'KNOW?

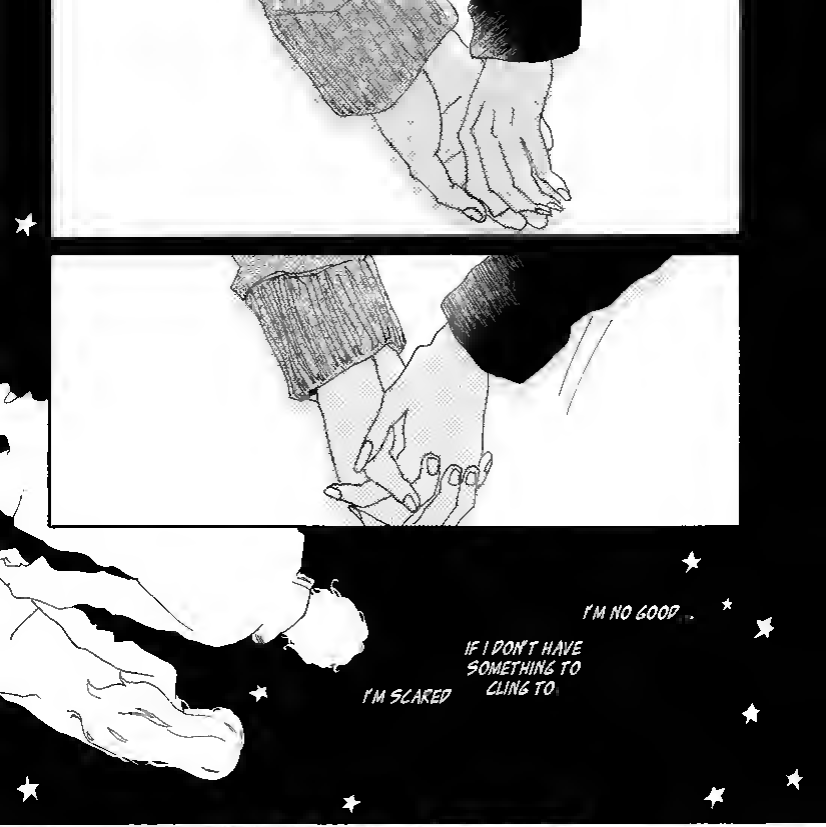
SO THE THREE OF US SHOULD LIVE TOGETHER!
ガッ
SFX: GRAB
ぶちぶちぶちっ
SFX: SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP

GET OUT!!!
CRASH!!
HAH AHA!
AHA-HAHA!
...
HM?
WHAT IS IT-?
HEY.....
...
HAHAHAHA
THAT SURPRISED ME! I WAS ALMOST KILLED!
DON'T "WHAT IS IT" ME..
I... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START.....

TN: NET CAFES/MANGA CAFES IN JAPAN ARE PLACES WHERE YOU CAN PAY TO USE A PRIVATE CUBICLE WITH YOUR OWN PC/INTERNET AND YOU CAN SURF THROUGH A LIBRARY OF MANGA AND TAKE THEM BACK TO READ THEM. THEY USUALLY HAVE FOOD AND SHOWERS SO A LOT OF PEOPLE STAY THE NIGHT THERE.
YEAH
YOU TOLD ME OVER THE PHONE THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE ONE RIGHT NOW...
WAS YOUR GIRL-FRIEND, RIGHT?
...THAT WOMAN EARLIER...
SHOULD WE GO TO A NET CAFE?
AH, YOU MEAN A PLACE TO LIVE? I GUESS THE BOTH OF US ARE HOME-LESS NOW, HUH?
HUH?
AH
WELL, SHE WASN'T THERE AT THE TIME, SO...
HUH?
HUH? WHERE TO?
I'M TIRED
I'M GOING HOME...
I JUST...
J...I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY-MORE...
HAHA--
WASN'T THAT WHAT YOU MEANT?
TN: JAPANESE TERM "IMA" CAN MEAN EITHER "DON'T HAVE ONE" OR "NOT HERE", HENCE THE CONFUSION.

WHY?
THE OFFICE? CAN I COME TOO?
...YOU... SHOULD GO BACK...
TO YOUR GIRL-FRIEND
...BUT.. WE JUST BROKE UP...
I.. WAS PLANNING TO BE WITH YOU FROM NOW ON, SHINO-CHAN..
CAN'T I?

YOU CAN'T.
...IS...
WHAT I SHOULD SAY...
RIGHT?


I'M NO GOOD.
IF I DON'T HAVE SOMETHING TO CLING TO
I'M SCARED

TEXT MANGA CAFE
I'M HOPELESS.
マンガ喫茶
Manga Box
ハナボン
5F・4F

MOM...
I'VE FINALLY BECOME A REFUGEE
SLUMP
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
UGH
WHY AM I EVEN ASKING MYSELF THAT?
SLUMP
I FEEL EMPTY
SLUUUMP
I FEEL EMPTY
AREN'T YOU GOING TO READ MANGA, SHINO-CHAN?
MAYBE I'LL JUST CRY
Wash

ARE YOU MAD?
...
...
はんぐもの
I DON'T KNOW...
...MAYBE I'M JUST VENTING.
...
...

WHY DON'T WE...
CLICK
LIVE TO-GETHER?
6 18 帖
洋室
I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.
I...
I CAN'T PROVIDE FOR YOU LIKE THAT WOMAN DID, YOU KNOW?

I JUST THOUGHT OF A REALLY GOOD PART-TIME JOB, SHINO-CHAN
IT'S FOR YOUNG WOMEN
THE PAY IS REALLY GOOD!
AH, THAT'S RIGHT.
PLUS, I GET THE MONEY FROM MY MEDICAL EXPERIMENT PART TIME JOB AT THE END OF EVERY MONTH..
...I TOLD YOU, THAT'S NOT MY INTENTION.
IT'S NOT THE SEX INDUSTRY-!
NOT TO MENTION THE SEX INDUSTRY...
I WORKED AS A HOSTESS IN MY LATE TEENS, AND I WAS FIRED AFTER THREE DAYS! I'M REALLY NOT SUITED TO THAT KIND OF JOB...
NO, I..
Hello?
I'LL TRY CONTACTING THEM~
WHO?!
HUH?
HUH???
beep
beep
.....

Café POP
KEY COFFEE
KAWATANI'S ACQUAINTANCE?
CLATTER
STEP
STEP
STEP
HUH?
UM...
CLATTER
HUH?
FUMING
!
Eek!
Super simple.
"ALL YOU HAVE TO DO AFTER THAT IS FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS!"
"THEY'LL PROBABLY GIVE YOU A CARD AND A CELLPHONE"
...

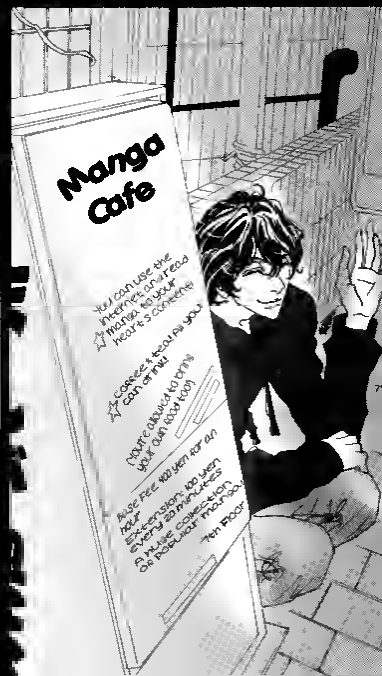
五反田駅
GOTANDA STATION
I ended up gonna even though I'm still not sure about this.
BEEP
!!!!!
Gotanda 3 o' clock
HUH?
BEEP BEEP BEEP
HUUU UUH?
Thank you so much for using our service.
The amount has been withdrawn.
XX Bank
BEEP
Shinagawa 3.25
品川駅
Shinagawa Station
XX Bank... ...
HM...?!
Pin code 4649, withdraw two million yen
SIGN: XX BANK
I WITH DREW IT
Pin code 4649
RIIIING

GOOD WORK.
VROOOOOM
HUH...??
HUH?!
10%. TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND YEN.
AND A NEW CARD AND PHONE...
flip
flip
WELL THEN.
W-WHAT..
DID I
?? JUST DO.... ???
WOBBLE
IT'S FINE, IT'S FINE!

OKAY?
THAT'S ALL IT IS! YOU'RE JUST HELPING OUT PEOPLE WHO'RE HAVING TROUBLE BECAUSE THEY CAN'T WITHDRAW MONEY
THEY SAID A YOUNG WOMAN WOULD BE BETTER BECAUSE IT WOULD LOOK LESS SUSPICIOUS AT THE BANK!
I DON'T REALLY KNOW THE DETAILS EITHER
AH.. IT'S BETTER IF YOU DON'T RESEARCH IT THOUGH
For your own sake.
...THIS IS THE FIRST TIME MY BANK ACCOUNT BALANCE HAS EXCEEDED A MILLION YEN..
Money
5
Transaction(yen)
Balance(yen)
200,000
360,716
150,000
100,000
200,000
250,000
1,050,716
IC
ATM
BUT I'M TOO SCARED TO USE IT!
WHAT I'M THINKING BUT
IS
HUH...??
Tokyo station.
I'M STILL FRAGGING ON
YEAH-
THEY SAID YOU CAN'T QUIT UNLESS YOU FIND A REPLACEMENT!
Panic
TURN YOUR PHONE OFF DURING MEETINGS!

AND ON...

I'M DRAG-GING ON...


Manga Cafe
You can use the internet and read manga as your heart's content!
Please be careful with your belongings!
Don't disturb others with your loud voice!
Rate: Free, 40 yen for an hour
Extension: 20 yen every 30 minutes
Time: Closed on the third Monday
7th Floor

AND ON AND ON AND ON
DRAGGING ON..
WHOA
THAT'S PRETTY AMAZING
ARE YOU WATCHING IT FOR FREE?
YEAH.
HM.. MUST BE NICE TO BE A GUY
GETTING TO SEE SUCH A PRETTY EROTIC GIRL FOR FREE
THESE ARE BIGGER THOUGH.
AH..

I KNOW THIS FEELING
I KNOW IT
BEFORE IT WAS ALWAYS
LIKE THIS...

I THINK TO MYSELF, "IT'S BETTER THAN BEING ALONE."

I AVOID THE ISSUE AND THINK TO MYSELF,

"MAYBE THIS IS JUST HOW IT IS?"

EVEN THOUGH I THINK TO MYSELF, "MAYBE IT'S DIFFERENT?"

I'M JUST BEING SWAYED.

I KNOW IT.

THEN I CAN MASK MY MISERY.

AS LONG AS I CAN CONVINCE MYSELF "I LIKE HIM"...

AND

(HOW SAD.)

(ALTHOUGH IN THE END IT WAS ONE-SIDED.)

...LAST TIME WAS JUST AN EXCEPTION.

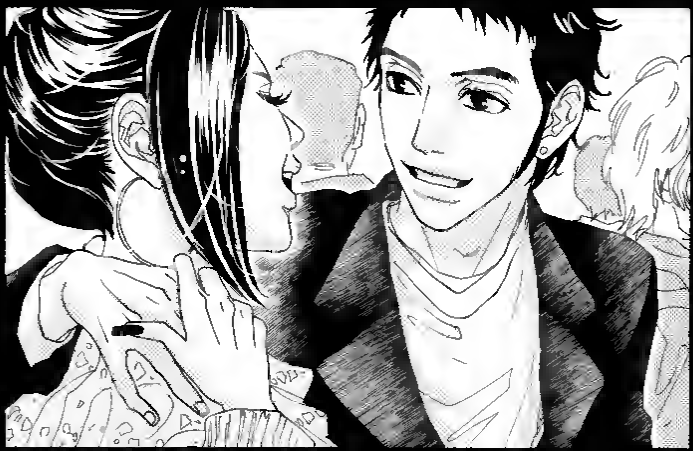
ALWAYS...

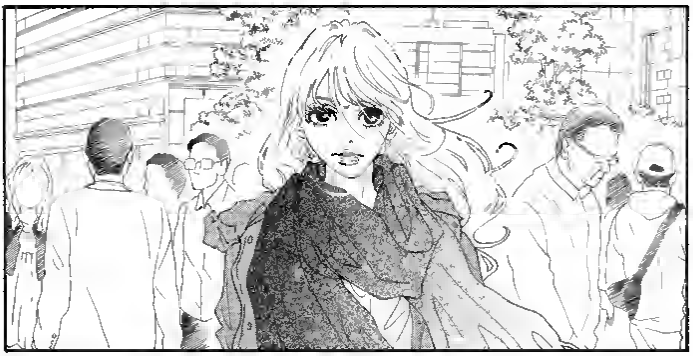
LIKE THIS.

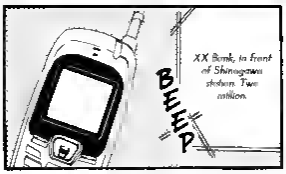
IT WAS ALWAYS...

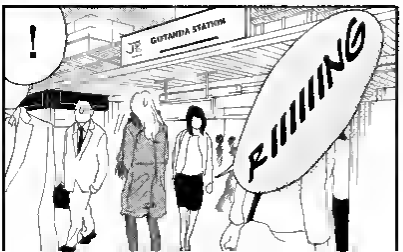
YEAH.

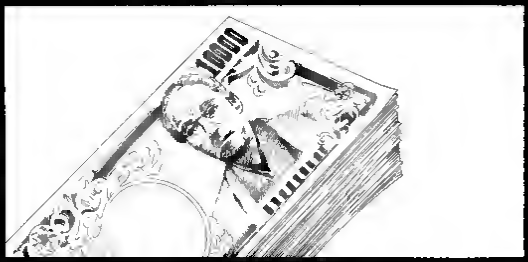
THAT WAS
"LOVE" TO ME.






BEEP
XX Bank, in front of Shinagawa station. Two million.


!
JR GOTANDA STATION
RIIIIING



MONEY THAT'S FLEETING LIKE A BUBBLE.

A RELATIONSHIP THAT'S FLEETING LIKE A BUBBLE.

I'M JUST CLINGING ONTO THOSE BUBBLES...

DESPERATE FOR AIR.

Shino